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## **Book Review: Charles E. McClelland. Berlin, the Mother of All Research Universities, 1860–1918.**

David Cahan

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930 Book Reviews: Modern

**Charles E. McClelland.** *Berlin, the Mother of All Research Universities, 1860–1918.* 270 pp., figs., bibl., index. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2016. \$95 (cloth).

Charles McClelland has long been one of the leading scholars of German universities and professionalism in Germany. His *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700–1914* (Cambridge, 1980), for example, is a fundamental introductory work for anyone wishing to understand the structure, growth, and development of the German universities during this period.

To help celebrate its bicentennial (2010), the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (to use the University of Berlin's official name since 1949) commissioned a six-volume history, of which McClelland was the co-author of Volume 1, running from 1810 to 1918 and published in German. The work under review is an augmented, English-language version of that volume. That fact perhaps helps explain why the book is so expensive. To say the very least, it far surpasses the forty pages devoted to the period 1870–1910 in the standard history of the university by Max Lenz (4 vols., 1910).

The University of Berlin unexpectedly began life in 1810 as the “Berliner Universität” and as compensation for Prussia's loss of Halle during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1828 it was renamed the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, retaining that name until 1949. Located in the heart of Berlin (on Unter den Linden), during its first half-century its facilities left much to be desired and its faculty, before midcentury, was of mixed scientific distinction. It was largely in the 1860s, as Berlin became a “big” city and as Prussia took on economic and political heft, that the university, located cheek by jowl with the monarchical court, governmental headquarters (including the educational ministry), and military command, emerged as a national and, soon, international research center. Indeed, my only critique of McClelland's study concerns its muddled, misleading title, “the Mother of All Research Universities.” As is well known, and as McClelland himself eventually points out (but only *en passant*), it was Halle and Göttingen in the mid-eighteenth century that first promoted research as a central feature of the university. Besides, the advancement of research at the German universities stemmed not from any one institution but, rather, from a gradually forming system of research-oriented universities. Nonetheless, in the imperial period Berlin most definitely became an outstanding research university and, for some, a model of its kind. That point is beyond dispute.

McClelland concentrates on the period of Berlin's greatest intellectual and institutional success: from 1860 until shortly before the Great War. His work is based entirely on secondary sources; he has thereby done readers the great service of summarizing and analyzing everything of importance (mostly in German) that has appeared on his subject. After briefly recalling the university's origins and first half-century, he discusses in detail its professoriate and its generally close attachment to the Prussian authorities; the university's financing and the changing state of academic freedom; the general rise of new scholarly and scientific institutes as well as medical clinics; the university's relation to other Berlin academic institutions (e.g., the State Library and the Charité); the changing student body and its place within a big city; the role of minorities (especially Jews, Poles, Russians, Americans, and women); the university's place in the public sphere; the university in the Great War; and the university as a “model” (or not) for others. All this is presented within its larger historical context: the university's setting within a rapidly growing Berlin and its response to larger developments in Prusso-German history. McClelland discusses, among much else, how the university contributed or reacted to German militarism, population change, increased student enrollments, economic growth and depression, flagging financial support, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, antisocialism, and the women's movement. He also writes with discernment: there are lots of statistics in this book, which McClelland skillfully uses to avoid overgeneralizations. Often enough, he compares Berlin's developments with those elsewhere, especially its competitors and rivals in Bavaria and Saxony (above all, Leipzig).

Finally, McClelland reminds experts and informs novices of what modern scholars call the “Humboldt Myth”: the supposedly planned, reform nature of the new University of Berlin; the supposedly complementary and unified relationship between research and teaching, along with the existence of academic freedom and “pure science”; the supposed emergence of *Bildung* out of the *Wissenschaften*; and the supposed unification of the disciplines within the Philosophical Faculty. He shows that those below the full-professor

level did most of the teaching and (thus) often found it difficult to conduct research; that “academic freedom” was often enough undermined; that most Berlin students enrolled for reasons of professional training and that many disciplines were oriented toward practical purposes; that the increasing specialization of the disciplines meant that they were increasingly unrelated to one another; and so on.

*Berlin, the Mother of All Research Universities, 1860–1918*, should be read or consulted by all historians of science and by historians of higher education, in Germany and beyond.

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